

# Sexual Victimization and Subsequent Police Reporting by Gender Identity Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Adults

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Prevalence of sexual victimization among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons is frequently found to be higher than the prevalence reported by their heterosexual peers. Transgender individuals are often included solely as part of larger LGBTQ research samples, potentially obfuscating differences between sexual orientation and gender identity. In this study, the authors examined sexual assault/rape in a large convenience sample of LGBTQ adults ( $N = 1,124$ ) by respondents' gender identity (*cisgender*, *transgender*) to determine whether differences exist in lifetime prevalence of sexual assault/rape and subsequent police reporting. Findings indicate transgender individuals report having experienced sexual assault/rape more than twice as frequently as cisgender LGBQ individuals. Authors found no statistically significant difference in reporting sexual violence to police. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** sexual assault; rape; gender; sexual minority; law enforcement

Nearly 3.5% of Americans identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ; Gates, 2011), and prevalence of experiencing sexual assault/rape among these individuals is higher than among their heterosexual peers (e.g., Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). A national estimate suggests rates of sexual assault among cisgender<sup>1</sup> lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) persons to be as high as 46% for lesbian women, 75% for bisexual women, 40% for gay men, and 47% for bisexual men, compared to 43% for heterosexual women and 21% for heterosexual men (Walters et al., 2013). Although research results suggest comparatively high rates of sexual victimization of LGBTQ persons by sexual orientation, there is considerably less research focusing on gender identity and transgender<sup>2</sup> individuals in particular. Given that approximately 0.5% of adults

identify as transgender (Conron, Scott, Sterling Stowell, & Landers, 2012), and transgender individuals represent approximately 8% of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population (Gates, 2011), this study aims to address this gap in the literature by comparing rates of cisgender and transgender sexual assault/rape victimization and subsequent police reporting activity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Rape and Sexual Assault Defined

As recently as 2012, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defined *forcible rape* in gendered terms, specifically as “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will” (FBI, 2012b, p. 1, paragraph 1). However, in March 2012, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III approved a new, more inclusive definition (FBI, 2012a). The term *forcible* was dropped and now the FBI defines *rape* as “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim” (FBI, n.d., paragraph 3). Thus, rape, sodomy, and sexual assault with an object are all considered rape for the purposes of the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports; this excludes statutory rape<sup>3</sup> (FBI, 2013).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS; 2014) holds a similar definition of *rape*, indicating that force can include both psychological and physical force resulting in vaginal, anal, or oral penetration as well as attempted rape (including verbal threats). The BJS (2014) differentiates *rape* from *sexual assault*, which is defined as attacks, either completed or attempted, involving unwanted sexual contact between a victim and perpetrator, excluding rape or attempted rape; this includes verbal threats.

### Sexual Assault/Rape of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons

**Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Persons.** Although prevalence of sexual assault/rape among all cisgender LGB individuals is high, females appear to be at particularly high risk for victimization, with data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) indicating that 46.4% of lesbian women and 74.9% of bisexual women experience sexual assault (excluding rape) in their lifetimes (Walters et al., 2013), compared to 44.6% of women generally (i.e., regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity; Black et al., 2011). Although lower than the prevalence of sexual assault, prevalence of rape is still high at 13.1% for lesbian women and 46.1% for bisexual women (Walters et al., 2013); prevalence for women generally falls at 18.3% (Black et al., 2011). According to the NISVS data, nearly 100% of perpetrators in both sexual assault and rape against lesbian and bisexual females are male (Walters et al., 2013).

Authors of a systematic review on sexual assaults against gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals found lifetime sexual assault estimates to be even higher among lesbian and bisexual women, as high as 85% (Rothman, Exner, & Baughman, 2011). In looking at adulthood sexual assault in particular, Hequembourg, Livingston, and Parks (2013) found that since the age of 14 years, 71% of lesbian and bisexual women had experienced at least one incident of sexual aggression, including unwanted sexual contact (65%), sexual coercion (39%), attempted rape (32%), and rape (43%).

Although typically not as high as prevalence seen in lesbian and bisexual women, prevalence of sexual assault and rape for gay and bisexual men is also very high. NISVS data

indicate that among men generally, 1.4% and 22.2% report rape and other sexual violence, respectively (Black et al., 2011). In a sample of 183 gay and bisexual men, approximately 51% and 67% reported an incident of childhood and adult (age 14 years and older) sexual abuse, respectively (Hequembourg, Parks, Collins, & Hughes, 2014). Results of Rothman and colleagues' (2011) systematic review of lifetime sexual assault among gay and bisexual men indicate similar prevalence, as high as 54%. Because of small cell sizes and high relative standard error, the NISVS data on rape of males was not reported; however, data on sexual assault (excluding rape) indicate that 40.2% of gay and 47.4% of bisexual men have been victimized, both at statistically significant higher rates than heterosexual men (20.8%; Walters et al., 2013).

**Transgender Persons.** In a study using data from the Virginia Transgender Health Initiative Study ( $N = 271$ ), 26.6% of transgender participants reported a history of sexual assault since age 13 years, with 89.2% of those stating their gender identity or expression was the primary motivator for the assault; researchers found no differences in rates of sexual violence between transgender men and transgender women (Testa et al., 2012). Although estimates of victimization among transgender individuals are lacking in comparison to estimates for their LGB peers, according to a review by Stotzer (2009), sexual violence against transgender individuals is more well documented than other forms of violence in this community, in part because of Departments of Public Health and their investment in sexual health research. In Stotzer's (2009) systematic review, prevalence of sexual assault/rape motivated by gender identity or gender expression among transgender persons ranged from 10% to 86%. In a small retrospective study of sexual violence among transgender adults age 50 years and older, of the 44 respondents who provided data on sexual assault experiences, 64% had experienced "unwanted sexual touch" (p. 145), most often before age 19 years (Cook-Daniels & Munson, 2010). In as many as 74% of sexual assaults against transgender persons, the victim knows the perpetrator (Cook-Daniels & Munson, 2010; Testa et al., 2012). In Testa and colleagues' (2012) study of sexual violence against transgender individuals, only 25.8% of perpetrators were strangers, whereas 48.4% were acquaintances, 33.3% were family members, and 24.7% were partners.

## Reporting to Police and Current Protections

A recent systematic review concluded that transgender individuals face myriad issues in their interactions with police officers, particularly when it comes to seeking assistance after victimization; specifically, many transgender individuals do not report their victimization to law enforcement and those who do often experience mishandled cases (Stotzer, 2014). In a national examination of reporting victimization to the police between 2006 and 2011, researchers estimated that 211,200 rape/sexual assault victimizations (65%) went unreported (Langton, Berzofsky, Krebs, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012); however, these data are not broken down by sexual orientation or gender identity. Some scholars have argued that rates of reporting victimization, such as intimate partner violence, may be lower among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) individuals than for heterosexual individuals because of issues of heterosexism and homophobia (e.g., Brown, 2008). Among transgender individuals, issues around transphobia may only serve to decrease rates of reporting even further. Indeed, Testa and colleagues (2012) found that transgender victims reported only 9.1% of sexual violence acts to police. According to data from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, the most comprehensive U.S. survey of

transgender/gender nonconforming individuals ( $N = 6,450$ ), only 35% of respondents said they felt comfortable seeking police assistance, whereas 46% reported being uncomfortable, and 19% reported neutral feelings (Grant et al., 2011). This is perhaps unsurprising given that some transgender individuals report negative interactions with police officers themselves; 2% reported being sexually assaulted by a police officer for being transgender or gender nonconforming, and 30% reported that officers typically treated them disrespectfully in their interactions (Grant et al., 2011). These numbers are even higher for transgender women in particular. In their recent study of Latina transgender women's experiences with law enforcement in Los Angeles, California, Woods, Galvan, Bazargan, Herman, and Chen (2013) found that approximately 65% of respondents reported being treated "unfairly" or "very unfairly" by law enforcement officers (p. 385). Moreover, 22% of the participants in the Woods et al. study reported sexual assault by a law enforcement officer, including 15% by an officer in uniform, 11% by an undercover officer, and 4% by sheriffs.

On a national level, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was recently reauthorized with specific LGBTQ provisions (United States Senate, 2013). This includes a decree that programs receiving assistance from the Office on Violence Against Women cannot deny programmatic benefits or discriminate against persons based on gender identity (United States Senate, 2013), as defined in the United States Code Hate Crime Acts as "actual or perceived gender-related characteristics" (Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, 2014). Although the 2009 passage of this federal legislation is significant, much state legislation does not currently mirror the Act (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2011). As of June 2013, only 15 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Vermont) and the District of Columbia have laws targeting sexual orientation- *and* gender identity-based hate or bias crimes (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2014). Given research findings that many transgender persons perceive their sexual assault/rape victimizations to be motivated by gender identity (Testa et al., 2012), it is important that laws at the federal, state, and local levels are not only in existence but also enforced.

The purpose of this current exploratory study is to build on the limited extant literature investigating the sexual assault/rape victimization of LGBTQ adults by gender identity (i.e., cisgender and transgender), including self-reported prevalence and reporting of victimization to the police. This exploration lends important new knowledge to an already well-established literature on varying forms of victimization experienced by LGBTQ persons generally. Specifically, this study of LGBTQ adults seeks to provide much needed distinction regarding the sexual assault/rape experiences of cisgender and transgender adults in the LGBTQ community. Thus, this study addresses two research questions: Do cisgender and transgender individuals differ in the prevalence of (a) sexual assault/rape victimization and (b) reporting sexual assault/rape victimization to police?

## METHOD

### Sample and Recruitment

In August and September 2011, One Colorado, a statewide LGBT advocacy organization, collected data for programmatic planning and advocacy. This study used data from the 2011 LGBT Health Survey, which is an anonymous, online survey available in both

English and Spanish. Prospective participants had to be age 18 years or older, identify as LGBTQ, and live in Colorado. The survey was advertised to prospective participants through One Colorado's e-mail contacts, partner organizations' member lists, and Facebook, resulting in 1,193 respondents. Participants had to provide their anonymous, electronic consent prior to completing the survey and had the option of being included in a random drawing to win 1 of 20 \$25 cash prizes. Given that One Colorado originally collected the data for internal purposes, the authors obtained institutional review board approval from their university for secondary data analysis. Although the survey included questions on a range of health-related topics, this analysis only includes data from items pertaining to the present research questions.

Of the 1,193 respondents, several cases were removed if they did not meet inclusion criteria for analysis. Authors began by removing cases if the respondent did not report gender identity ( $n = 8$ , 0.67%), gender identity could not be determined ( $n = 3$ , 0.25%), the respondent reported being male or female *and* exclusively heterosexual ( $n = 24$ , 2.01%), or the respondent reported being cisgender but sexual orientation could not be determined ( $n = 1$ , 0.08%). Based on the sample of 1,157 that met the criteria for inclusion, cases were removed if respondents did not provide a response to the dependent variable assessing sexual assault/rape victimization ( $n = 28$ , 2.35%) or if the respondent indicated experiencing sexual assault but did not provide a response to the police reporting variable ( $n = 5$ , 0.42%), leaving a final analytic sample of 1,124.

During the second phase of data cleaning, researchers assessed missingness, normality, and uni- and multivariate outliers. Missing cases were either missing completely at random or missing at random. Gender identity was non-normally distributed, although this was anticipated given that only approximately 11.0% of respondents identified as transgender. Similarly, univariate outliers existed, although the authors decided to retain cases given that all variables were dichotomous. Mahalanobis distance indicated six multivariate outliers in the sample. Upon further investigation, these six respondents all reported being transgender, having experienced sexual assault/rape, and having reported the sexual assault/rape to the police. Given that these six participants represented the only such cases, the authors chose to retain these cases.

## Measures

**Gender Identity.** In original data collection, gender identity options included *male*, *female*, *transgender*, *genderqueer*, *FTM*, *MTF*, *transman*, *transwoman*, and *other*, with instructions to check all that apply. For this study, gender identity was recategorized for each subquestion. First, to compare data between cisgender and transgender respondents, the authors dichotomized the original gender identity options into cisgender (*male* or *female* with no indication of any transgender-identified genders) and transgender (any confirmation of transgender identities). Second, to compare data within the subsample of cisgender respondents, the authors removed transgender respondents from analysis and dichotomized the cisgender participants into males and females. Finally, to compare data between subsamples of cisgender respondents to transgender respondents, the authors compared cisgender males only to transgender individuals and cisgender females only to transgender individuals.

**Sexual Assault and Reporting to Police.** Whether a respondent had ever experienced sexual assault/rape and reporting sexual assault/rape to police were assessed by one question each, both with a dichotomous response set (*yes* or *no*).

## Data Analysis

The authors completed several steps aimed at answering the two research questions driving the study. First, the authors examined the prevalence of sexual assault/rape victimization within the entire sample. Second, the authors ran chi-square analyses to determine if gender differences exist in either (a) prevalence of sexual assault/rape victimization or (b) reporting of sexual assault/rape to police. Specifically, we conducted four comparisons examining differences between (a) cisgender persons and transgender persons, (b) cisgender males and cisgender females, (c) cisgender males and transgender persons, and (d) cisgender females and transgender persons.

The authors were not able to compare victimization experiences across various transgender identities as originally collected or collapsed into subcategories because of small sample sizes of some more specific identities. Although this research offers an important glimpse into the sexual assault/rape experiences of a sample of the transgender community, the small transgender subsample size impeded a more nuanced investigation that might reveal important differences within the transgender-identified population.

## RESULTS

Cisgender males made up most of the sample (51.6%,  $n = 580$ ) followed by cisgender females (37.8%,  $n = 425$ ) and transgender persons (10.6%,  $n = 119$ ). The average age of respondents ( $n = 1,119$ ) was 41.9 years, with a range of 19–90 years. Among participants who provided their racial/ethnic identity ( $n = 1,117$ ), 81.4% identified as White. Nearly three-fourths of participants who provided their sexual orientation ( $n = 1,124$ ) identified as either gay (47.1%,  $n = 529$ ) or lesbian (27.0%,  $n = 304$ ). Specific demographics for the total sample, as well as the cisgender male, cisgender female, and transgender subsamples, are presented in Table 1. Although a more nuanced investigation of the transgender subsample was not possible, based on the authors' collapsed categorization of transgender identities, transgender women ( $n = 48$ ) and genderqueer/other-identified individuals ( $n = 48$ ) each accounted for approximately 40% of the transgender subsample, whereas transgender men ( $n = 23$ ) accounted for approximately 20% of the subsample.

The results presented below represent the chi-square analyses. See Table 2 for specific prevalence of sexual assault/rape and reporting to the police by gender identity (*total sample, cisgender total, cisgender male, cisgender female, transgender*).

### Cisgender and Transgender Participants

Of the entire sample, 16.2% ( $n = 182$ ) of respondents reported ever experiencing sexual assault/rape. Results of a chi-square analysis indicate transgender individuals reported statistically significant higher lifetime prevalence of sexual assault/rape than their cisgender peers,  $\chi^2(1, n = 1124) = 29.77, p < .001$ . Of those participants who self-reported ever experiencing sexual assault/rape ( $n = 182$ ), 21% reported the victimization to police. A chi-square analysis revealed no statistically significant association between gender identity and reporting sexual assault/rape to the police,  $\chi^2(1, n = 182) = 1.26, p = .262$ .<sup>4</sup>

### Cisgender Male and Cisgender Female Participants

Of the cisgender participants ( $n = 1,005$ ), 14.1% ( $n = 142$ ) of respondents reported ever experiencing sexual assault/rape. Results of a chi-square analysis indicate that cisgender



TABLE 1. Sample Demographics

	Total Sample <i>N</i> = 1124	Cisgender Males <i>n</i> = 580	Cisgender Females <i>n</i> = 425	Transgender Individuals <i>n</i> = 119
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Age (years)	<i>n</i> = 1,118 41.9 (13.2)	<i>n</i> = 575 41.6 (13.1)	<i>n</i> = 424 43.1 (12.9)	<i>n</i> = 119 38.9 (13.7)
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
Sexual orientation	<i>n</i> = 1,124	<i>n</i> = 580	<i>n</i> = 425	<i>n</i> = 119
Gay	529 (47.1)	512 (88.3)	10 (2.4)	7 (5.9)
Lesbian	304 (27.0)	1 (0.2)	278 (65.4)	25 (21.0)
Bisexual	79 (7.0)	23 (4.0)	37 (8.7)	19 (16.0)
Queer	57 (5.1)	5 (0.9)	31 (7.3)	21 (17.6)
Heterosexual	12 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (10.1)
Other	23 (2.0)	6 (1.0)	7 (1.6)	10 (8.4)
Multiple orientations	120 (10.7)	33 (5.7)	62 (14.6)	25 (21.0)
Race	<i>n</i> = 1,117	<i>n</i> = 575	<i>n</i> = 423	<i>N</i> = 119
American Indian	5 (0.4)	2 (0.3)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.8)
Asian/Asian American	4 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.9)	0 (0.0)
Black/African American	32 (2.8)	18 (3.1)	14 (3.3)	0 (0.0)
Hispanic/Latino	57 (5.1)	34 (5.9)	19 (4.5)	4 (3.4)
White	915 (81.4)	474 (82.4)	345 (81.6)	96 (80.7)
Multiracial	97 (8.6)	44 (7.7)	36 (8.5)	17 (14.3)
Other	7 (0.63)	3 (0.5)	3 (0.7)	1 (0.8)

Note. Freq = frequency.

females reported statistically significant higher prevalence of lifetime sexual assault/rape than cisgender males,  $\chi^2(1, n = 1,005) = 48.40, p < .001$ . Of those cisgender participants who self-reported ever experiencing sexual assault/rape ( $n = 142$ ), 23.2% reported the victimization to police. A chi-square analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between cisgender males and cisgender females in reporting sexual assault/rape to the police,  $\chi^2(1, n = 142) = 0.91, p = .339$ .

Cisgender Male, Cisgender Female, and Transgender Participants

A chi-square analysis revealed that transgender participants reported statistically significant higher lifetime prevalence of sexual assault/rape than cisgender male participants,  $\chi^2(1, n = 699) = 63.26, p < .001$ , and cisgender female participants,  $\chi^2(1, n = 544) = 5.47, p = .02$ . However, in reporting of sexual assault/rape to the police, no significant

**TABLE 2. Prevalence of Sexual Assault/Rape and Subsequent Police Reporting**

	Total	Cisgender	Cisgender Male	Cisgender Female	Transgender
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Sexual assault/rape	<i>N</i> = 1,124	<i>N</i> = 1,005	<i>N</i> = 580	<i>N</i> = 425	<i>N</i> = 119
Yes	182 (16.2)	142 (14.1)	44 (7.6)	98 (23.1)	40 (33.6)
No	943 (83.8)	863 (85.9)	536 (92.4)	327 (76.9)	79 (66.4)
Police reporting	<i>N</i> = 182	<i>N</i> = 142	<i>N</i> = 44	<i>N</i> = 98	<i>N</i> = 40
Yes	39 (21.4)	33 (23.2)	8 (18.2)	25 (25.5)	6 (15)
No	143 (78.6)	109 (76.8)	36 (81.8)	73 (74.5)	34 (85)

differences existed between either transgender participants and cisgender male participants,  $\chi^2(1, n = 84) = 0.153, p = .70$ , or transgender participants and cisgender female participants,  $\chi^2(1, n = 138) = 1.80, p = .18$ .

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the lifetime prevalence of sexual assault/rape and subsequent police reporting in a sample of LGBTQ adults, specifically to determine whether differences exist between cisgender LGBQ individuals and transgender individuals. Of the entire LGBTQ sample, approximately 21.0% of respondents reported ever experiencing sexual assault/rape, with transgender individuals reports prevalence more than twice that of their cisgender LGBQ peers. In line with other literature (e.g., Testa et al., 2012), approximately one in three transgender individuals' reports having experienced sexual assault/rape. This prevalence is higher than their cisgender LGBQ peers in this sample and higher than the prevalence of sexual assault for both adults generally and, more specifically, adult women (Black et al., 2011). When looking at the gendered patterns of sexual assault within the cisgender subsample, it appears that cisgender LGBQ persons demonstrate similar sexual assault/rape victimization patterns as their heterosexual peers, albeit at higher rates. That is, females more often report experiencing sexual assault/rape than males (e.g., Black et al., 2011).

Despite differences in victimization itself, there were no significant differences in sexual assault/rape reporting to police between cisgender and transgender participants. This nonsignificance may be because of cell sizes because only 6 of 40 transgender individuals indicated that they reported their victimization to the police. As previously mentioned, these six respondents were considered multivariate outliers in the data cleaning process; however, the authors retained the cases as to not depict a false picture of the police-reporting variable. Despite statistical insignificance, when examining prevalence, only 15% of transgender individuals reported their sexual assault/rape to the police compared to 23% of cisgender individuals suggesting the need for further investigation with larger sample sizes.

For transgender individuals, followed by cisgender females, experiences of sexual assault/rape are more prevalent than they are for cisgender males. However, despite the



highest reported prevalence of experiencing sexual assault/rape, in reporting of such victimization to the police, transgender individuals report to police the least. This appears to be consistent with scholarship suggesting LGBTQ individuals may report other forms of victimization less frequently than heterosexual persons (e.g., Brown, 2008) and that nearly half of transgender persons, specifically, report being uncomfortable in seeking police assistance (Grant et al., 2011).

## Limitations

This study is not without limitations, including an underrepresentation of participants of color and the use of a convenience sample. In their systematic review of sexual assault against LGB individuals, Rothman et al. (2011) found that studies relying on convenience samples typically reported higher sexual assault prevalence compared to population-based or census-type studies. Unfortunately, it remains unclear whether studies using population-based samples underestimate or studies using nonprobability samples overestimate sexual assault among the LGBTQ population. On a similar note, gender identity, sexual orientation, and experiences of sexual assault/rape are all potentially sensitive topics for respondents, thus giving rise to concerns of social desirability. Moreover, although comprehensive definitions around sexual violence exist (e.g., FBI, n.d.), the survey used in this study did not provide definitions of *sexual assault* or *rape* to participants; thus, individual participant interpretations of these terms may have influenced the results of this study. Despite relying on a convenience sample, based on the estimate that 65% of sexual assault/rapes go unreported to police (Langton et al., 2012), there is a possibility that the prevalence of sexual assault/rape presented here is higher in reality.

As with many studies, this study relies on cross-sectional data. Although it is reasonable to assume that LGBTQ persons, and transgender persons in particular, may be at higher risk for sexual assault/rape, the present findings do not lend to explanations of causality. Moreover, the present sample may not be representative of all LGBTQ persons. These respondents, who are in some way engaged with social services in the LGBTQ community, may be qualitatively different than those LGBTQ individuals who do not associate with LGBTQ-specific resources.

As previously stated, the small subsample of transgender respondents prohibited a more nuanced examination of differences in sexual assault experiences by transgender identity. Certainly, collapsing transgender identities into a single category may obscure differences between more discrete gender categories. Moreover, based on the collapsed categorization by the researchers, the present transgender subsample predominantly consisted of transgender women and genderqueer/other-identified individuals; thus, results may be less representative of the experiences of transgender men.

Regarding victimization experiences, sexual assault and rape are different experiences and are defined as such (BJS, 2014). Conflation of sexual assault and rape in the original data collection constrained the secondary data analysis because the authors were unable to extrapolate differences between sexual assault and rape. Also, because the original data collection asked respondents to report on *ever* experiencing sexual assault/rape, there was no way for authors to distinguish childhood and adult experiences of sexual assault/rape. Moreover, the authors do not know how participants identified their gender at the time of the victimization. This may be particularly salient when considering the *lifetime* sexual violence experiences of transgender men, some of whom may have been assaulted at a time prior to transition when they may have identified as cisgender women, rates for whom are high regardless of sexual orientation (Black et al., 2011; Walters et al., 2013) and

may be conflating the rate of transgender respondents' sexual victimization in the present sample. However, there is at least some literature indicating rates of sexual violence do not differ between transgender men and transgender women (Testa et al., 2012). Regardless, the present results should be interpreted with caution.

## **Implications**

Keeping these limitations in mind, the authors believe this to be a robust analysis of a large sample of LGBTQ individuals and offer several important implications. First, where still needed, inclusive definitions of sexual assault and rape should be adopted. In light of the current findings, the FBI's (2012a) change to gender-inclusive language is an important step in this direction. Other definitions that include only males and females (e.g., BJS, 2014) would be more inclusive if revised to include more gender identifiers, or by removing gender identifiers entirely and adding a clause such as, "regardless of gender identity or gender expression" to the definition. Second, and switching focus to future research, repeating the present investigation with a larger sample size will be prudent to establish if there is a difference between cisgender and transgender individuals in police reporting of sexual assault/rape. The use of population-based data, in particular, would be beneficial because it could help to establish whether or not the data patterns found in this convenience sample hold true in a larger probability sample. This type of research would also be valuable in determining whether probability sample data underestimate or nonprobability sample data overestimate sexual assault/rape among LGBTQ individuals (Rothman et al., 2011). Moreover, because transgender respondents experienced sexual assault/rape twice as often as their cisgender peers, continued research focusing specifically on transgender individuals and their experiences of victimization is necessary.

It is imperative that social service agencies and providers are prepared to address the needs of LGBTQ individuals, and transgender persons in particular, who may seek their help in lieu of or in addition to law enforcement assistance. In a recent analysis of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, Seelman (in press) found that 5% of transgender participants reported denial of equal treatment or service based on gender identity when trying to access rape crisis centers. As Seelman notes, this rate might be higher if other reasons for denial were included. Given that data from the NTDS were collected prior to the most recent VAWA reauthorization, it is possible that we may begin to see a decrease in the percentage of transgender individuals being denied access or equal treatment to services following sexual assault or rape. It is crucial that any programs receiving funding from the Office on Violence Against Women ensure compliance with the most recent VAWA authorization, namely, extending or continuing to extend protections to all clients regardless of gender identity. Given this, agencies and providers serving victims of sexual violence would benefit from cultural competency trainings around issues specific to the LGBTQ population, and transgender clients specifically.

This study illuminates a significant disparity in the victimization experiences of LGBTQ individuals. Overall, LGBTQ individuals are experiencing sexual violence at alarmingly high rates. Legislation in recent years, such as the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 (2014) and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (United States Senate, 2013), are important steps toward increasing and equalizing protections for the LGBTQ community. Within the present sample, transgender individuals self-reported the highest prevalence of victimization, yet the lowest prevalence of reporting to police. Although more research is needed

to confirm these findings, it is clear that it will take a commitment from all stakeholders involved—from researchers to law enforcement to victim advocates—to promote and provide better protections for transgender individuals in an effort to reduce the prevalence of sexual violence as well as to ensure that a victim's transgender identity does not impact the availability and quality of assistance received following sexual or any other form of violence.

## NOTES

1. Defined as individuals who feel their birth-assigned gender, body, and identity are congruent (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009)
2. Defined as individuals whose identities, expressions, or behaviors differ from those generally associated with their birth-assigned gender (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2014)
3. Defined as “nonforcible sexual intercourse with a person who is under the statutory age of consent” (FBI, 2013, p. 3)
4. Only 6 of the 40 transgender participants who reported experiencing sexual assault/rape reported to police. In data cleaning, these respondents were found to be multivariate outliers.

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